

Preliminary Range of Alternatives

**Yuma Field Office
Resource Management Plan Revision**

July 2005



Range of Alternatives

Alternative A (No Action): describes the continuation of the present management of the Yuma Field Office planning area. Alternative A provides an opportunity to compare the current management with various strategies suggested to be analyzed for future management (Alternatives B, C, and D). Alternative A will serve as a baseline for most resources and land use allocations.

Alternative B (Consumer): generally places an emphasis on appropriate human use and influences and the widest array of uses. It identifies areas most appropriate for various public uses and emphasizes those uses, including recreation, mineral, and energy development. It includes the greatest number of miles of open roads and trails. It places a greater emphasis on developed and motorized recreation opportunities and less on remote settings and primitive recreation.

Alternative C (Mixed Use): provides visitors with opportunities to experience natural and cultural resource values of the YFO planning area. It allows visitation and development within the planning area while ensuring resource protection is not compromised. It is generally managed with decisions that have a greater balance of multiple uses. It proposes a combination of natural processes and active management techniques for resource and use management and it provides access through transportation network.

Alternative D (Environmental Protection): generally places emphasis on preservation of the planning area's natural and cultural resources through limited public use and discontinuation of grazing use. It focuses on natural processes and other unobtrusive methods for natural resource use and management. It proposes the fewest miles of open roads and trails, increased opportunities for dispersed, non-motorized recreation; and fewer motorized and developed recreation opportunities.

Lands and Realty

Disposals

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) states that “the public lands be retained in Federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning procedure provided for in this Act, it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest.”

- Alternative A: A total of 4,614 acres identified for disposal in the 1992 Amendment to the RMP remain available for disposal. These acres would be carried forward in all alternatives.
- Alternative B: Includes pending lands actions and a public proposal from the Town of Quartzsite (36,741.95 acres).
- Alternative C: Includes pending lands actions with the exception of the Town of Quartzsite public proposal.
- Alternative D: The parcels identified for disposal in Alternative A and the existing Recreation & Public Purpose (R&PP) lands actions.

Withdrawals

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are proposed for withdrawal from location and entry under the general mining laws and the public land laws under all alternatives. ACECs would also be withdrawn for consideration under the mineral leasing laws and from disposal for mineral materials under the Materials Act as amended.

- Currently 164,075 acres of wilderness areas are withdrawn from mineral entry.
- The land use plan would use the least restrictive tool for withdrawal of designated or proposed ACECs.

Acquisition

Lands may be acquired by BLM through purchase, exchange, donation, or eminent domain. Lands to be acquired must either:

- facilitate access to public lands and resources;
- maintain or enhance public uses and values;
- facilitate implementation of this RMP; or
- provide for a more manageable land ownership pattern.

Utility Corridors

- Yuma Field Office (YFO) is proposing 10 utility corridors common to all alternatives.
- These proposed corridors were coordinated with the Western Utility Group Corridor Study.
- YFO would reclassify one utility corridor through the Palo Verde Wilderness in California as a right-of-way. There would be a new corridor established around the perimeter of the wilderness for future use.
- All designated major utility corridors would be one mile in width.
- YFO utility corridors would match adjoining corridors in California and Arizona.

Communication Sites

- YFO has 10 existing communication sites. The range of alternatives is from 9 to 12 communication sites. The Kofa and Airway Beacon communication sites would be retired. A new Qwest site and Laguna Mountains (high power) site would be proposed.

Renewable Energy

- Consider future applications for renewable energy only under moderate to high potential areas for wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass development.

Lands and Realty Allocations by Alternative

	Lands Actions by Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Disposal (acres)	4,614	45,276	11,094	5,102
Utility Corridors (number)	10	10	10	10
Communication Sites (number)	10	12	11	9
• High Power Site	0	1	1	0

Minerals

In recognition of the mineral laws, BLM would manage lands for multiple use.

Leasable Minerals

- Public lands would be available for mineral leasing in accordance with existing leasing laws unless precluded from leasing by other laws or regulations (Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended and supplemented, 43 CFR 3100 oil and gas, 43 CFR 3200 geothermal, 43 CFR 3400 coal, 43 CFR 3500 solid minerals other than coal and oil shale).
- YFO would consider closing areas to surface occupancy demonstrating resource or cultural protection needs.
- Leasable fluids include oil, gas, and geothermal.

Locatable Minerals

- Public lands would be available for location of mining claims in accordance with existing mining laws unless precluded from mining by other laws or regulations (FLPMA, Section VII).
- A mining plan of operations is required in special status areas not withdrawn from mineral entry, such as National Wild and Scenic River System, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, National Wilderness Preservation System administered by the BLM, areas designated as closed to off-highway vehicle use, lands or waters known to contain federally listed threatened or endangered species or proposed or designated critical habitat, national monuments, and national conservation areas.

Salable Minerals

- Public lands would be available for utilization of salable minerals at the discretion of the authorized officer in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- BLM would prevent unnecessary degradation of the landscape and comply with federal laws and regulations and state laws.
- Salable mineral extraction would proceed only under a valid contract or free use permit.
- A financial guarantee and reclamation are required for salable mineral operations subject to applicable laws and regulations (43 CFR 3601.40 and 3602.14)

Community Material Pits

- Community material pits would be established to accommodate the growing population and the changing demographics of the local community.
- Proposed community material pits vary by alternative from one to five.
- Establishing community material pits would alleviate trespass cases.
- BLM would manage all other lands in compliance within the existing regulatory framework, which may include imposition of some restrictions to protect endangered species, cultural resources, etc.

Recreation

BLM recognizes that recreation and tourism are significant economic drivers in most cities, towns, and communities affected by the issues and concerns of public land management. A clear majority of the public's interactions with BLM are through various forms of outdoor recreation and sports. BLM's *Priorities for Recreation and Visitor Services* (2003) states, "Our multiple-use mission is to serve the diverse outdoor recreation demands of visitors while helping maintain the sustainable conditions needed to conserve their lands and their recreation choices."

- YFO manages a total of 26 recreation sites within the planning area, including 9 fee sites. In Alternatives B and C the YFO may propose the development of additional fee sites. In Alternative D the YFO would not propose any new fee sites.
- YFO manages two Long-Term Visitor Areas (LTVA) and would not propose any additional LTVAs within the planning area.
- In Alternatives B, C, and D the BLM would allocate all public lands as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) or Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMA).
- SRMAs would be managed to target demonstrated recreation/tourism market demands for specific activities, experiences, and benefit opportunities. These opportunities would be produced through maintenance of prescribed natural resource setting character and by structuring and implementing management, marketing, monitoring, and administrative actions accordingly.
- There are three types of SRMAs, each managed by a different tourism market strategy.
 - SRMAs with a *community tourism market strategy* are managed primarily to benefit the local community and in collaboration with the local community.
 - SRMAs with a *destination tourism market strategy* are managed as a regional or national destination in collaboration with the local community. This is likely to require more outreach and marketing, done through partnerships.
 - SRMAs with an *undeveloped tourism market strategy* are managed to intentionally maintain dispersed and undeveloped recreation opportunities.
- SRMAs are further broken into Recreation Management Zones (RMZ) which provide distinct recreation niches within their respective SRMA.
- YFO has identified six potential SRMAs. The following is a brief description of proposed SRMAs, their acreages, tourism market strategies, and their RMZs.

Greater Yuma SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
0 acres	166,835 acres	65,074 acres	35,853 acres
No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy	Community Tourism Market Strategy	Community Tourism Market Strategy
No RMZs	Zone 1: Urban Recreation Lands Zone 2: Limotrophe Zone 3: Historic Trail Zone Zone 4: Imperial Dam Recreation Area Zone 5: Mittry Lake Wildlife Area Zone 6: Laguna Mountains Zone 7: Gila Mountains Zone 8: South Desert Communities Zone Zone 9: Heritage Zone	Zone 1: Urban Recreation Lands Zone 2: Limotrophe Zone 3: Historic Trail Zone Zone 4: Imperial Dam Recreation Area Zone 5: Mittry Lake Wildlife Area Zone 6: Laguna Mountains Zone 7: Gila Mountains	Zone 1: Urban Recreation Lands Zone 2: Limotrophe Zone 3: Historic Trail Zone Zone 4: Imperial Dam Recreation Area Zone 5: Mittry Lake Wildlife Area

Colorado River Corridor SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
0 acres	130,199 acres	94,124 acres	19,395 acres
No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy
No RMZs	Zone 1: Ehrenberg- Cibola Zone Zone 2: Heritage Zone Zone 3: Trigo Mountain Wilderness Zone 4: Byway Zone	Zone 1: Ehrenberg- Cibola Zone Zone 2: Heritage Zone Zone 3: Byway Zone	Zone 1: Ehrenberg- Cibola Zone Zone 2: Heritage Zone

Ehrenberg-Cibola SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
223,978 acres	0 acres	0 acres	0 acres
No Tourism Market Strategy	No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy
No RMZs	No RMZs	No RMZs	No RMZs

La Posa SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
0 acres	414,487 acres	414,487 acres	241,336 acres
No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy	Destination Tourism Market Strategy
No RMZs	Zone 1: Highway 95 Corridor Zone 2: Intensive Camping Zone Zone 3: Intensive Day-use Zone Zone 4: Heritage Zone Zone 5: New Water Mountain Wilderness	Zone 1: Highway 95 Corridor Zone 2: Intensive Camping Zone Zone 3: Intensive Day-use Zone Zone 4: Heritage Zone Zone 5: New Water Mountain Wilderness	Zone 1: Highway 95 Corridor Zone 2: Intensive Camping Zone Zone 3: Intensive Day-use Zone Zone 4: Heritage Zone

Yuma East SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
0 acres	587,944 acres	457,974 acres	511,865 acres
No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	Community Tourism Market Strategy	Undeveloped Tourism Market Strategy	Undeveloped Tourism Market Strategy
No RMZs	Zone 1: Dispersed Use Zone Zone 2: Eagletail Mountain Wilderness Zone 3: Byway Zone	Zone 1: Dispersed Use Zone Zone 2: Eagletail Mountain Wilderness Zone 3: Byway Zone	Zone 1: Dispersed Use Zone Zone 2: Eagletail Mountain Wilderness

Southwest Arizona SRMA			
Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
0 acres	0 acres	101,761 acres	130,779 acres
No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	No SRMA No Tourism Market Strategy	Undeveloped Market Strategy	Undeveloped Market Strategy
No RMZs	Zone 1: Historic Trail Zone Zone 2: South Desert Communities Zone Zone 3: Heritage Zone	Zone 1: Historic Trail Zone Zone 2: South Desert Communities Zone Zone 3: Heritage Zone	Zone 1: Historic Trail Zone Zone 2: South Desert Communities Zone Zone 3: Heritage Zone Zone 4: Gila Mountains Zone 5: Laguna Mountains

- ERMAs are public lands with no identifiable market demands for structured recreation opportunities. ERMAs are managed only for custodial purposes. Management actions within ERMAs may address user conflicts, resource stewardship standards and objectives, and public health and safety.

ERMA	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	0 acres	33,160 acres	200,334 acres	394,020 acres

Desired Future Conditions

- YFO would establish a ranger force of visitor management specialists to provide for basic safety and resource protection, the enhancement of the visitors’ recreation experience, and visitor management for those facilities necessary to control intensive public use areas
- YFO would provide for the general safety of the recreating public by providing basic sanitation facilities and emergency medical services through partnerships, private and public funding, and coordination and cooperation with county, state, and local entities
- Short-term camping would be allowed in the 100-year Colorado River floodplain during periods of normal water levels, except where specifically prohibited. Prohibited areas would be indicated to the public by use of signs or fencing.
- Long-term winter visitor camping would be permitted in the 100-year floodplain only within concession areas.
- The length of stay for camping would be limited to 14 days within any 28-day period except in concessions, public agency leases, and Long-term Visitor Areas.
- YFO would continue to recognize existing recreation lease rights or the sale of remaining lease terms.

Travel and Transportation

Travel Management Areas

The entire field office would be broken into travel management areas for the purpose of addressing route networks and transportation management plans which would be written subsequent to the completion of the plan revision.

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) land use allocations are composed of three categories—open, closed, and limited to existing routes—until designated using the route evaluation tree (as displayed on travel network map).

- Areas and routes within the planning area must be classified for motorized travel activities as open, closed, or limited to existing routes as displayed on a travel network map until designated using the route evaluation tree. Criteria for these classifications are established in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (f), (g), and (h) respectively.
- Competitive use off-highway vehicle events would be examined on a case-by-case basis. A site specific environmental review would be completed for the area prior to each event to determine exact course location, assess impacts to resources, and develop appropriate mitigation and stipulations.
- Closed areas currently reflect 164,075 acres within existing designated wilderness.
- YFO has one existing open area (Ehrenberg Sandbowl) and proposes to open four or five additional sites (Martinez Lake, Blaisdell, Jackrabbit Pass, and Coyote Wash) varying by alternative. YFO proposes to expand the existing Ehrenberg Sandbowl.
- YFO would complete the route designation process within five years of the signing of the Record of Decision for the Resource Management Plan.
- YFO would take the best available information from existing data and present it to the public as the existing route network. The existing network would then be brought forward through the route evaluation process.
- Each route would be evaluated and the least intrusive method of restoration would be used based on geography, topography, soils, hydrology, and vegetation.

Travel Management Network (TMN)

- Identify trails, ways, and routes within the planning area intended for motorized and non-motorized travel on public lands.
- Improve legal access to public lands by identifying access needs across non-federal lands and recommend acquisition and funding strategies.
- Provide reasonable access to private inholdings surrounded by public lands.
- Be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and develop greater access for the physically challenged.
- Set guidelines for managing roads and trails to protect resources, promote public safety, and improve public compliance on designated routes.
- Develop monitoring procedures sufficient to detect and evaluate related impacts so that management changes can occur, if needed.
- Create an implementation schedule that must cover public education, mapping, signing of designated trails and routes, rehabilitation of closed routes, law enforcement, and maintenance.
- Incorporate the effective use of volunteers to provide “on the ground” information and route marking/signing for the public.
- Increase public involvement in the establishment, monitoring, and protection of routes/trails on public lands.
- Set timelines for monitoring and plan review.
- All paved roads and gravel/dirt roads maintained by a state, county, or city would automatically be included as open or limited in the TMN.

Restoration of Closed Routes

BLM’s strategy for restoring closed routes or trespasses would be accomplished as rapidly as funding permits. Restoration generally means obliterating the trail. Sensitive resources in immediate danger, or those that have been damaged by vehicle trespass, would be a high priority for restoration. Typically, the restoration would be limited to that portion of the route of trespass that is in the line of sight from an open route. The proposal for restoration would include:

- not repairing washed-out routes;
- using natural barriers, such as large boulders;
- using rocks and dead and down wood to obscure the route entryway;
- employing mulching, chipping, and raking to disguise evidence of routes;
- ripping up the route bed and reseeded with vegetation native to that area;
- utilizing fences or barriers;
- providing signage, including information to OHV users, on the need and value of resource protection;
- converting motorized two track routes into non-motorized single track routes
- leaving the first 100 feet from the centerline of an open route unrestored to provide pullout areas or camping opportunities intended to discourage or prevent new ground disturbance elsewhere.

Travel Management Network Proposed Allocations by Alternative

Allocation	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Open (acres)	442	4,878	4,878	442
Closed (acres)	164,075	164,075	164,075	164,075
Limited Use (acres)	1,123,405	1,118,969	1,118,969	1,123,405
Total Acres**	1.3M	1.3M	1.3M	1.3M

Special Area Designations

Wilderness

There are 166,631 acres of designated wilderness within the YFO. Wilderness areas are designated by Congress and are managed according to the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984, the Arizona Desert Wilderness Act of 1990, regulations for wilderness management at 43 CFR 6300, BLM Manuals 8560 and 8561, BLM Handbook H-8560-1, interim operation plans currently in effect for range, wildlife, and fire management in wilderness, and wilderness management plans. The land use plan would not address reducing or eliminating existing wilderness areas, changing existing wilderness boundaries, or allowing motor vehicle or other use of mechanical transportation in any wilderness area.

- YFO has four wilderness areas which total 164,075 acres and would remain common to all alternatives.
- YFO would classify all wilderness acres as Visual Resources Management Class I.
- All wilderness is withdrawn from mineral entry within the YFO planning area.
- All wilderness is closed to OHV use within the planning area.
- YFO has completed wilderness management plans for all Arizona wilderness areas, with the exception of the Trigo Mountain Wilderness.

National Historic Trail (NHT)

Within the U.S. the Anza National Historic Trail is approximately 1,200 miles through Arizona and California. The trail follows the Gila River for approximately 31 miles through YFO. It is designated by the National Park Service.

- YFO currently manages for the Anza National Historic Trail. The trail would remain common to all alternatives.

National Recreation Trail (NRT)

- YFO currently manages Betty's Kitchen NRT; at a half mile in length, this is the only national recreation trail within the entire state of Arizona. This trail would be carried forward in all three alternatives.

Wild And Scenic Rivers

Assess all eligible river segments and determine which are suitable or non-suitable according to Section 5(d)(i) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and make a

recommendation (if applicable) to Congress for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System (see BLM Manual 8351).

- YFO currently has no wild and scenic rivers within the planning area. A cooperative assessment is underway with the Phoenix Field Office for portions of the Gila River.

Back Country Byways

- YFO currently has no Back Country Byways. A range of alternatives proposes one to eight back country byways which vary by alternative.
- YFO would attempt to match Back Country Byways with the adjacent field offices.
- Back Country Byways are required to meet public safety requirements.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

The guidance for ACECs is included in FLPMA where federal agencies are directed to protect and conserve ecosystems in need of “special management attention” by designating them as “areas of critical environmental concern” in their land use planning process (FLPMA § 1702 (a)). ACECs must meet the relevance and importance criteria in 43 CFR 1610.7-2(b) and must require special management (43 CFR 1601.0-5(a)) to:

- a) Protect the area and prevent irreparable damage to resources or natural systems, or
- b) Protect life and promote safety in areas where natural hazards exist.

- YFO currently manages 8,153 acres within two ACECs (Big Marias and Sears Point). These areas would be carried forward and common to all alternatives.
- None of the existing ACECs overlap designated wilderness areas.
- There are four other areas proposed for ACECs (Dripping Springs, Limitrophe, Walter’s Camp, and Palomas Plains). The Limitrophe and Walter’s Camp were received as public proposals.
- ACECs would be considered as restricted from surface occupancy.
- Withdrawal
 - ACECs are proposed for withdrawal from location and entry under the general mining laws and the public land laws under all alternatives. The ACECs would also be withdrawn for consideration under the mineral leasing laws and from disposal for mineral materials under the Materials Act as amended.
 - Existing withdrawals are designated wilderness areas on 164,075 acres.

- BLM is exploring options to withdrawal in order to utilize the least restrictive tool to manage the resource.
- Alternative B: remove the Palomas Plain ACEC.

Special Area Designations by Alternative

Allocations	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Wilderness				
Eagletail Mountains	X	X	X	X
Muggins Mountain	X	X	X	X
New Water Mountains	X	X	X	X
Trigo Mountain	X	X	X	X
Total Wilderness	164,075	164,075	164,075	164,075
National Historic Trail				
Anza National Historic Trail	X	X	X	X
National Recreation Trail				
Betty's Kitchen	.5 miles	.5 miles	.5 miles	.5 miles
Wild and Scenic Rivers				
<i>No eligible designations</i>				
Back Country Byways				
Gold Nugget		X	X	
Highway 95			X	X
Red Raven		X	X	
Clayton Hills		X	X	
Plomosa (Lake Havasu preferred)		X	X	X
Red Cloud		X	X	X
Aqua Caliente		X		
Brenda		X	X	
ACEC Designations				
Gila River Cultural Area (Sears Point) (acres)	3,667	28,504	28,504	28,504
Big Marias (acres)	4,485	4,485	4,485	4,485
Walter's Camp (acres)				4,400
Dripping Springs (acres)			9,798	9,798
Limitrophe (acres)				1,979
Palomas Plain				600,000
Gila River Terraces and Trails	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown

Visual Resources Management

The BLM must prepare and maintain on a continuing basis an inventory of visual values on all public lands for each RMP effort (BLM Manual 8400.06A.1). The Visual Resource Management (VRM) system provides a way to identify, evaluate, and determine the appropriate levels of management of scenic values. The inventory of visual values has been documented for the RMP and is represented under Alternative A. The inventory serves as the basis for the VRM class allocations in Alternatives B, C, and D, which take in to account the other resource uses on the public lands within the YFO. The alternatives in this section of the RMP would set landscape classes ranging from Class I to IV, and future projects would adhere to the following VRM class objectives as appropriate.

The goal of the land use plan is to subdivide public lands into the following classifications of desired future conditions for visual resources:

- Class I: To preserve the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and must not attract attention.
- Class II: To retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low.
- Class III: To partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate
- Class IV: To provide for management activities that require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.

- Acreages change as a reflection of the range of alternatives.
- The only lands allocated to VRM Class I are designated wilderness areas under all alternatives.
- VRM Class I is allocated as wilderness areas only.

Visual Resources by Alternative

VRM Class	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
I (acres)	164,075	164,075	164,075	164,075
II (acres)	547,406	547,406	568,038	657,328
III(acres)	585,029	552,500	593,189	487,431
IV(acres)	33,640	66,169	4,848	21,317

Wilderness Characteristics

Wilderness characteristics are defined as outstanding opportunities to experience naturalness, solitude, and primitive and unconfined recreation.

Naturalness - A high degree of naturalness where lands and resources are affected by the forces of nature and where the imprint of human activity is substantially unnoticeable.

Solitude - Outstanding opportunities for solitude when sites, sounds, and evidence of other people are rare or infrequent and where visitors can be isolated, alone, or secluded from others.

Primitive and Unconfined Recreation - Outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation where the use of the area would be through non-motorized, non-mechanical means, and where no or minimal developed recreation facilities are encountered.

- YFO received a public proposal for a total of 317,339 acres within 22 units representing areas with wilderness characteristics. YFO received only one detailed write up and map for the Little Horn unit proposed for wilderness characteristics.
- YFO conducted and documented the validation assessment for the proposed wilderness characteristic units of the public proposal, 47 percent of the lands, or 147,918 acres, met the criteria for wilderness characteristics.
- The results of the assessment and potential allocations are displayed in the table below.
- Lands allocated for wilderness characteristics contain all three land use allocations.
- Arizona Game and Fish Department's (AGFD) use of motorized and mechanized equipment off designated routes is considered an administrative use and will be allowed in suitable locations (as agreed to by BLM and AGFD) for such purposes as the following:
 - water supplementation;
 - collar retrieval;
 - capture and release of wildlife; and
 - maintenance, repair, and building or rebuilding of wildlife waters.

Wilderness Characteristic Allocations by Alternative

Allocations	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Wilderness Characteristics (acres)	0	54,110	91,351	147,918

Wilderness Characteristics Management Actions by Alternative

Management Actions	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Surface-disturbing activities or the permanent placement of structures and facilities, with the exception of activities allowed under the law or regulation, would be allowed only when substantially unnoticeable in the landscape, subject to criteria outlined below. ¹			X	X
New structures, including roads or trails, could be authorized to protect public safety, cultural sites, wildlife, ecological conditions, or as required by law.		X	X	
Maintenance of existing facilities would be allowed.		X	X	X
Allow the administrative use of motorized equipment, vehicles, and aircraft for natural and cultural resource management including but not limited to, water supplementation, collar retrieval, and capture/release of wildlife, maintenance, repair, and reconstruction or construction of wildlife waters.		X	X	
Minimize the administrative use of motorized equipment, vehicles, and aircraft for natural and cultural resource management. Authorize such use only when it is determined use of such equipment is appropriate and consistent with desired conditions for the area.				X
Vehicles including bicycles would be limited to existing routes and trails until route designation is completed.		X	X	X
The use of non-motorized mechanical transport would be allowed.		X	X	
Use of motor vehicles, and the construction of temporary roads, structures, and installations is allowed for emergency purposes.		X	X	X
Convert, where appropriate, closed vehicle routes for use as bicycle, equestrian, or hiking trails.		X	X	
Restore routes closed through the route designation process to natural conditions.				X
Develop new hiking and equestrian trails while preserving wilderness characteristics.		X	X	
Decrease the visual effect of facilities and trails on naturalness or scenic resources, when the opportunity arises, during reconstruction, replacement, or major maintenance.			X	X
Remove facilities that are no longer used unless they are of historic value.		X	X	X
Evaluate and rehabilitate existing, unused, disturbed areas to a natural condition consistent with natural resource restoration objectives.			X	X
Commercial operations and associated activities would be allowed when such activities conform to land use plan objectives including desired recreation settings, social and managerial settings, and VRM classes.		X	X	X

Management Actions	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Recreational or hobby collecting of mineral specimens when conducted without location of a mining claim and limited to hand collection and detection equipment may be allowed.		X	X	X
Public lands within wilderness characteristics allocations will be retained in public ownership.		X	X	X
Acquire State and private inholdings from willing sellers whenever practicable.		X	X	X
Existing and new operations on mining claims and/or mineral leases will be regulated using the appropriate laws and regulations to prevent unnecessary and undue degradation of the lands.		X	X	X
Any new mineral leases would be issued with a no surface occupancy stipulation.				X
Do not authorize sales of mineral materials.			X	X
Existing livestock grazing operations and support facilities are allowed to continue.		X	X	X
During fire suppression operations, minimum impact suppression techniques would be used.		X	X	X
Prescribed fires are allowed in conformity with a fire management plan so long as it is consistent in improving or maintaining the area's wilderness characteristics.		X	X	X
Vegetative manipulation to control noxious, exotic, or invasive plant species is allowed when there is no effective alternative and when the control is necessary to maintain the natural ecological balances within the area. Control may include manual, chemical, and biological treatment provided it will not cause adverse impacts to the wilderness characteristics.		X	X	X
Rehabilitation, stabilization, reconstruction, and restoration work on prehistoric and historic sites and structures, as well as, excavations and surface collection may be allowed if wilderness characteristics are maintained.		X	X	X
Applicable state wildlife agencies retain jurisdiction and responsibility with respect to fish and wildlife management and establish regulations and enforcement these uses. Fishing, hunting, and trapping are allowable activities.		X	X	X

¹ Project consideration criteria: In general, projects with a small footprint that, across the area as a whole, would benefit maintenance of wilderness characteristics and are compatible with other resource objectives could be approved.

Livestock Grazing Management

In Arizona, BLM grazing allotments are classified as Perennial, Ephemeral, or Perennial-Ephemeral. These classifications correspond to the following types of designated rangelands:

- Perennial-Rangeland: consistently produces perennial forage to support a year round livestock operation.
- Ephemeral-Rangeland: do not consistently produce enough forage to sustain a year round livestock operation but may briefly produce unusual volumes of forage to accommodate livestock grazing. There is a Special Rule for Ephemeral Range.
- Perennial-Ephemeral Rangeland: produces perennial forage each year and also periodically provides additional ephemeral vegetation. In a year of abundant moisture and favorable climatic conditions, annual forbs and grasses add materially to the total grazing capacity.

Allotments Administered by Yuma Field Office

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Section 3/15</u>	<u>Peren/Ephemeral</u>	<u>Public Land Acres</u>
Bishop	15	P	28,069
Calhoun	3	P/E	41,744*
Caliente Farms	15	P	2,718
Crowder-Weisser	3	P/E	224,504**
Dateland Ranch	15	P	16,325
Eagletail Ranch	3	P/E	179,460
Eagletail Ranch	3	E	119,643
Ehrenberg	3	E	75,024
Hyder Ranch	15	P	10,247
K Lazy B	3	P/E	128,498***
Martinez	3	E	64,045
Morton	3	E	28,268
Palomas	3	E	109,408
Palomas Ranch	15	P	4,577
Scott	3	E	119,258
Trust #1347	15	P	1,000
Weisser	3	E	67,674
Whitewing	15	E	<u>523</u>
			1,001,240

*This allotment is completely in the Lake Havasu Field Office but is managed by YFO. Grazing Decisions will be made in this revision.

**Approximately 110,252 acres of public land are within the YFO boundaries.

***Approximately 64,249 acres of public land are within the YFO boundaries.

- **Alternative A: No Action**
 - Continue to manage existing 11 perennial allotments (23,907 Animal Unit Months)
 - Continue to manage existing six ephemeral allotments.

- **Alternative B:**
 - Same as Alternative A.

- **Alternative C:**
 - Close grazing on six different Section 15 and six ephemeral allotments.

- **Alternative D:**
 - Close grazing within the planning area.
 - Rangelands do not consistently produce sustainable forage on a year-round basis.
 - Hot desert biome is not conducive to cow/calf operations.

- The range status may change based on public input.

- YFO will reconsider appropriate use of grazing in all alternatives.

Livestock Grazing Allocation by Alternative

Allocation	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Open (acres)	1,001,240	1,001,240	382,530	0
Closed (acres)	325,934	325,934	944,644	1,327,174
Total Acres	1,327,174	1,327,174	1,327,174	1,327,174

Wild Horse and Burro

- YFO currently manages one Herd Area and one Herd Management Area that share identical boundaries. This area is comprised of slightly more than one million acres.
- In all three alternatives, the Herd Management Area would be shifted west of Highway 95, south of I-10.
 - YPG has requested BLM remove animals from the east side of Highway 95.
 - Kofa National Wildlife Refuge has requested BLM remove wild horses and burros from the refuge.
- The eastern herd animals would be trapped and transferred or adopted out of the herd.
- The appropriate management level of wild burros is 165 and horses is 150.

Fish and Wildlife

The Sikes Act of 1974 authorized U.S. Department of the Interior, in cooperation with state agencies responsible for the administration of fish and wildlife laws, to plan, develop, maintain and coordinate programs for the conservation and rehabilitation of wildlife and fish on public lands within its jurisdiction. The 1987 land use plan designated priority wildlife habitat as riparian areas along the Colorado River, Gila River and certain desert bighorn sheep lambing areas.

Wildlife Habitat Management Areas

The RMP revision proposes to allocate six wildlife habitat management areas. These are:

- Colorado and Gila River Riparian Area: The goal for this wildlife habitat management area is to maintain and improve aquatic and riparian values, adopt objectives the Lower Colorado River Multi Species Conservation Plan, and conserve endangered species habitat of native fishes, southwestern willow flycatcher, yellow billed cuckoo, Yuma clapper rail, black rail, and neotropical migratory birds.
- Palomas Plain: Under alternatives C and D, BLM proposes to designate wildlife habitat to retain the unfragmented nature of the Palomas Plain. This area is located adjacent to the Lower Phoenix South planning area. It would be managed to support reintroduction of Sonoran pronghorn and big game.
- Desert Mountains: Several special status species are found in the desert mountains of YFO public lands. BLM would follow management prescriptions to conserve habitat for special status species in desert mountains. These species include desert bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, raptors, and bats.
- Dunes: YFO has identified several isolated dune areas that are good examples of biological diversity. The goal of the designation is to restore biological integrity where invasive species are present. Examples of key species include Cowle's fringe-toed lizard, scaly sandplant, flat-tailed horned lizard, and sandfood.
- Wildlife Movement Corridors: Arizona Game and Fish Department has identified areas where big game move between mountain ranges. BLM would manage these areas to retain unfragmented habitat.
- Natural Wildlife Waters: Natural waters such as tinajas and Dripping Springs would be managed to maintain natural quality. Natural wildlife waters contribute to biotic diversity.

Wildlife Habitat Management Areas by Alternative

Allocation	Acreage by Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Colorado River and Gila River Riparian Area		244,063	244,063	244,063
Palomas Plain			2,005,789	2,005,789
Desert Mountains		2,960,761	680,269	680,269
Dunes			66,659	66,659
Natural Wildlife Waters				unknown
Wildlife Movement Corridors			X	X

Watchable Wildlife Areas

YFO proposes three Watchable Wildlife Areas: Betty’s Kitchen is currently designated in the RMP. New proposals to add to this designation are Bonnie’s Kitchen at the Oxbow Campground and Gilmore’s Camp on the Colorado River.

Allocations	Alternatives			
	A	B	C	D
Watchable Wildlife Viewing Sites (acres)				
Betty’s Kitchen	16.4	16.4	16.4	16.4
Oxbow Bonnie’s Kitchen	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4
Gilmore’s Camp (pending land exchange)				424.4

Priority Species

Priority species of particular interest to the Yuma Field Office include raptors, nongame migratory birds, upland game birds, bats, and big game. Desired future conditions, management actions, and administrative actions for habitats of these species are being written in cooperation with the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Special Status Species

It is BLM policy to conserve threatened or endangered species and the habitats upon which they depend, to ensure all actions authorized, funded, or carried out by BLM are in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. BLM policy is to manage proposed, candidate and state listed species in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the states to prevent these species from becoming listed as a result of BLM actions. A total of 12 threatened and endangered species including one plant are listed by USFWS and occur or potentially occur within the planning area. One candidate bird is found within the planning area. There are three Arizona state species within the YFO planning area.

- BLM would apply management prescriptions for all alternatives according to consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Other Special Status Species that occur within the planning area are from the BLM, California, and Arizona lists.

Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species and Designated Critical Habitat	Candidate Species	State Listed Species	Special Status Plants
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Flat-tailed Horned Lizard	Crownless Milkweed Vine
Yuma Clapper Rail		Black Rail	Kearney Sumac
Razorback Sucker		Bell's Vireo	Kofa Mountain
Mojave Desert Tortoise		Sonoran Desert Tortoise	Barberry
Sonoran Pronghorn		Burrowing Owl	Long Leaf Sandpaper Plant
Bald Eagle			Parish Onion
Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl			Sand Food
California Brown Pelican			Schott Wire Lettuce
Gila Topminnow			
Bonytail Chub			
Desert Pupfish			
Pierson's Milkvetch			
Colorado Pikeminnow			

Vegetation

YFO proposes to manage the planning area for eight plant communities. These are: mixed riparian woodlands and wetlands, mesquite bosque woodlands, desert wash woodlands, braided channel floodplains, palo verde mixed cacti on bajadas and rocky slopes, creosote-bursage, mountain uplands, and dune complexes.

- In consideration of the natural pace of ecological transitions in the Sonoran Desert, the long term (generally greater than 50 years) objective is to maintain or restore the overall landscape. The best available data is currently the GAP vegetation mapping.
- YFO would prevent the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species using an integrated weed management strategy to promote the protection and restoration of native species.
- Priority plant populations and communities would be identified and monitored. These are plants or populations that are rare in the planning area but do not warrant protection under the Endangered Species Act.
- Under existing management, certain areas such as La Posa planning area and the Imperial Long-Term Visitor Area are closed to wood collection.
- Alternative D would close the entire field office to wood collection. Other alternatives allow for collection of dead, down, and detached wood for personal campfire use.

Wildland Fire Management

Yuma Field Office coordinates with other agencies to manage fire in accordance with the nationwide BLM fire policy. The BLM Arizona State Office prepared the *Arizona Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels and Air Quality Management* (AZLUP) (2003), which incorporates new management direction coming from the National Fire Plan and the 2001 Federal Fire Policy. This integrates fire and fuels management with other management activities to benefit both natural resources and multiple uses on BLM administered land within Arizona and the portion of California that falls within the Yuma Field Office boundaries.

- The new land use plan would be in accordance with the Arizona Statewide Land Use Plan Amendment for Fire, Fuels, and Air Quality Management. This would be common to all alternatives.
- All of YFO is in land use allocation Category 2 as Non-Fire Use; however, BLM uses prescribed fire as an appropriate management response.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are allocated to one or more of the following use categories: Scientific Use, Public Use, Traditional Use, Conservation for Future Use, Experimental Use, and Discharged from Management.

Desired Future Condition

The desired future condition for cultural resources throughout the planning area is to preserve and protect significant cultural resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.

Special Cultural Resource Management Areas

Areas on the landscape containing cultural resources that are particularly important for public use, scientific use, traditional use, or other uses as defined in BLM Manual 8110.4 can be allocated as Special Cultural Resource Management Areas (SCRMA). The primary purpose of this land use allocation is to differentiate some portions of a planning area from others in terms of cultural resource values. These areas will be considered priority areas for future cultural resource inventory and site documentation.

- Alternative A: Sixteen cultural resource sites and areas identified in the 1987 RMP would continue to be managed under the “conservation for future use” category; i.e., preserved in place. No SCRMA would be allocated.

SCRMA Acres Allocated for Alternatives B, C, and D

Special Cultural Resource Management Areas	B Commodity	C Mixed	D Conservation
Big Maria Terraces	530	530	530
Cibola Valley	0	570	570
Laguna Mountains	0	407	407
Ligurta Area	0	470	470
Limitrophe	0	1,979	ACEC¹
North Gila Mountains	0	142	142
Mittry Lake	0	97	97
Muggins Mountains Terraces	418	418	418
Palo Verde Point Area	134	134	134
Sears Point Mesas	2,8504	ACEC¹	ACEC¹
Senator Wash North	0	210	210
TOTAL SCRMA ACREAGE	2,9586	4,957	2,978

1. See Special Area Designations section for descriptions of, and management prescriptions for, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs).

Land Health Standards

Arizona Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration (Standards and Guidelines) were approved in April of 1997. The Standards and Guidelines identify the characteristics of healthy ecosystems on public lands and management actions that promote it. The Standards and Guidelines describe the conditions necessary to encourage proper functioning condition of ecological processes. The plan would follow the Standards and Guidelines for all alternatives.

- These standards would be carried forward into all alternatives
- Land Health Standards that were established in 1997 would be carried forward within the plan revision for all resources and all alternatives.

Public Health and Safety

According to applicable Federal and state laws and regulations, BLM would identify areas known to contain hazardous materials. The public health and safety issues to be addressed in the plan are as follows:

- Abandoned Mine Lands
- Debris Flows
- Unexploded Ordnance
- Mining and Milling Waste
- Landfills
- Illegal Dumping
- Undocumented Immigrants (safety concerns)

Soil, Water, and Air

YFO is in the process of developing desired future conditions for soil, water, and air resources consistent with environmental law, regulations, and guidance.

- Efforts to reduce soil erosion and control salinity are incorporated into projects on a case-by-case basis.
- Surface and ground water quality and quantity is analyzed on a case-by-case basis.
- The YFO planning area is within a PM₁₀ Non-attainment Area. YFO would comply with the State of Arizona for all proposed actions that would contribute to particulate matter emissions in the air as a result of actions taken in this plan.

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